VISIT…

CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER™

foreword
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Dean Shreck
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Ricardo Villagran
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James Novak
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In These Blue Depths Lie Hell
Lurene Haines
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Death, Where Is Thy Sting?
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afterword
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FOREWORD

What have we learned from our damnation, gentle reader? Some are doomed to hell. . .others choose their fate.

Case in point, editor Marcus McLaurin, presiding over this pit for an unprecedented 15 issues. While that number may pale in comparison to publications celebrating multiples of their hundredth issue, let's appreciate the scope of the evil in your hands (or talons. . . or tentacles. . .we're an equal opportunity offender). With each 48 page (previously 64) comic, there're generally three stories, translating into a trio of creative teams (writer, artist, letterer), effectively tripling the workload that an average comic might represent in coordinating concepts and concrete material. Add to that the headaches of production mechanics required for HELLRAISER's quality standards — arcane rituals of "pasting up mechanical boards" and "laying down balloons on acetate overlays" that cause the most perverse adept to shudder — and it's obvious that Marquis McLaurin (assisted by the equally scarified Tom Daning) has achieved a level of masochism that makes Leviathan itself green with envy. To the delight of sadists everywhere, this Cenobite-wannabe continued to push the razor ever deeper, both by increasing the frequency of hell's forces waging war on your comic shop and instigating ever more ambitious storylines (ala "The Devil's Brigade"); all this on top of his considerable other editorial duties (including TERROR, INC. (shameless self-plug!) and freelance writing (including the saga of Luke "Don't call me Power Man!" CAGE).

This eulogy does not signify Marcus's shuffling off this mortal coil, but it does denote his passing on these editorial reins to David Wohl (more on *him* in another foreword!) In the meantime, Mr. McLaurin directs his attention to numerous *new* Clive Barker projects due from Epic in the coming year (among them, the anti-Cenobite spin-off, THE HARROWERS), and I suggest a clapping of hands (or clanking of talons. . .or slurping of tentacles) in appreciation of the enjoyable agony he has been responsible for during his terrifying tenure.

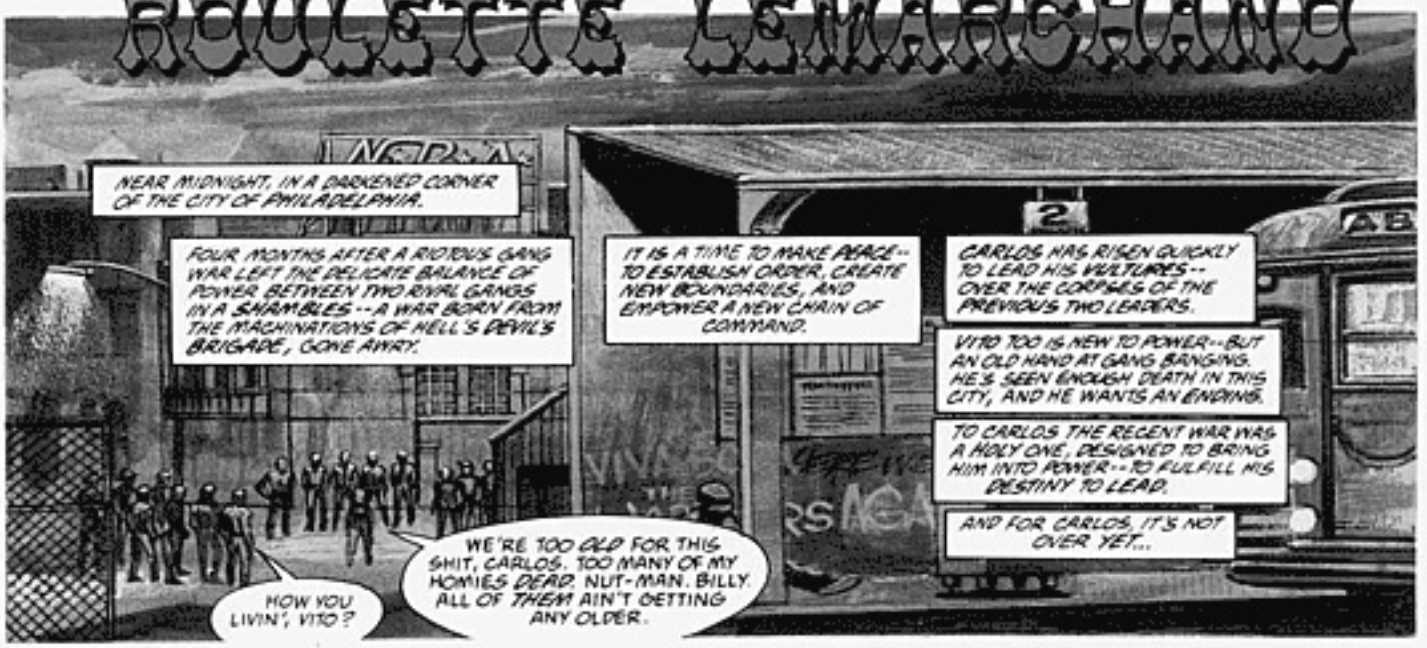
Speaking of enjoyable agony (didn't you just see that coming?) a trio of tales this time out. The sin of gambling inspires Dean Shreck and Ricardo Villagran to spin the wheel in "Roulette Lemarchand"; Lurene Haines and Dave Dorman (whose recent Nightbreed illo snarled out from the cover of EPIC #2) take love triangles and torment to new lows in "In These Blue Depths Lie Hell"; and those Harrowers turn the tables on the leather-and-mutilation set in "Death Where Is Thy Sting?", courtesy Malcolm Smith and Paul Johnson (whose visuals brought the Cenobite-Nightbreed war, JIHAD, to unholy life).

Mr. McLaurin's escape from HELLRAISER brings to mind my own departure from the editorship of this nether-region. When I left, I got a Lament Configuration and a bunch of chains tearing my flesh to ribbons. . .Marcus takes on editing five new comics and the accompanying night-sweats of worrying over a large corner of the Barker-verse.

And they say hell knows about torture. . .

Daniel Chichester
consulting editor

ROULETTE LEWARCHAND


NEAR MIDNIGHT, IN A DARKENED CORNER OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA.
FOUR MONTHS AFTER A RIOTOUS GANG WAR LEFT THE DELICATE BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN TWO RIVAL GANGS IN A SHAMBLES -- A WAR BORN FROM THE MACHINATIONS OF HELL'S DEVIL'S BRIGADE, GONE AWAY.
IT IS A TIME TO MAKE PEACE -- TO ESTABLISH ORDER, CREATE NEW BOUNDARIES, AND EMPOWER A NEW CHAIN OF COMMAND.
CARLOS HAS RISEN QUICKLY TO LEAD HIS VULTURES -- OVER THE CORPSES OF THE PREVIOUS TWO LEADERS.
VITO TOO IS NEW TO POWER -- BUT AN OLD HAND AT GANG BANGING. HE'S SEEN ENOUGH DEATH IN THIS CITY, AND HE WANTS AN ENDING.
TO CARLOS THE RECENT WAR WAS A HOLY ONE, DESIGNED TO BRING HIM INTO POWER -- TO FULFILL HIS DESTINY TO LEAD.
AND FOR CARLOS, IT'S NOT OVER YET...
HOW YOU LIVIN', VITO?
WE'RE TOO OLD FOR THIS SHIT, CARLOS. TOO MANY OF MY HOMIES DEAD. NUT-MAN. BILLY. ALL OF THEM AIN'T GETTING ANY OLDER.

TO CARLOS, EACH CONFLICT IS ANOTHER PAGE IN THE INFINITE PLAN -- A PLAN HE REALIZED LONG AGO MEANT HIM FOR GREAT THINGS.
AND, FOR ANY WHO STAND IN HIS WAY...
...A PLAN THAT DEMANDS DEATH.
... CRAZY, CARLOS! YOU CRAZY...

Dean Shreck
writer
Ricardo Villagran
Artist
James Novak
letterer

NOT CRAZY, MAN--DRIVEN--
--UH!
KRAKK
DIOS. NO.
YOU DON'T GET AWAY THAT EASY, VITO!
PLANNED THIS TOO LONG... GONE TOO FAR... YOU CHICKEN-SHIT, VITO!
YOU GOING DOWN TONIGHT, VITO! KOLD RED!
RED
WAIT FOR 'IM. VITO WANTS DIS BOY.
SHIT.
A FOOLHARDY MISTAKE--TO ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE CAUGHT IN ENEMY TERRITORY--CUT OFF FROM HIS MEN.
TOO FAR FROM HIS BOYS TO CONSIDER CALLING FOR HELP, AND TOO PRIDE-FULLY CLOSE TO HIS ENEMIES HAVE THEM HEAR IT...
BENSON
...HE OPTS TO FIGHT AGAIN, ANOTHER DAY.

BUYING PRECIOUS SECONDS, WHILE A NAGGING THOUGHT GOES WILDING THROUGH HIS HEAD:
HOW MANY TIMES IN THE PAST HAD HE RUN DOWN ONE OF VITO'S BOYS, CAUGHT OVER THE LINE, TO RUN HIM DOWN IN A DEADLY GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE?
AND WONDERING, IS THIS HIS TURN TO DIE IN THE MAZE?
THERE, MAN! HE WENT DOWN THERE!
WE'RE COMIN' DOWN FOR YOU, CARLOS! YOU JUST MADE YOU LAST CROSS!
YOU DEAD MEAT, MAN!

IS THIS HIS TURN?
LIGHT... GO TO THE LIGHT...
BEHIND HIM, THEIR SCUFFLING FOOTSTEPS ECHO.
A DESOLATE PLATFORM, DECADES OLD AND ABANDONED, YET INEXPLICABLY LIT BY SEVERAL ANTIQUATED WORK LIGHTS...
WHAT THE HELL LINE IS THIS?!
OH, JESUS... BOTH TUNNELS BLOCKED! NO WAY OUT! THEY COMING! IT AIN'T SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE THIS!
GOT TO HIDE...
...LORD, YOU GOTTA HELP ME. YOU GOTTA GIVE ME THE POWER... BLESS ME... DELIVER ME... LET ME KILL THESE BASTARDS!
HE IMAGINES HIMSELF GOING OUT IN A BLAZE OF GLORY-- KILLING ALL OF HIS ATTACKERS BEFORE COLLAPSING IN A BLOODY HEAP.
THEIR BLOOD ON HIS HANDS, AND FACE...
WORKING AREA
...UNTIL A WAY OUT PRESENTS ITSELF:
AN OPENING BIG ENOUGH FOR A MAN TO FIT THROUGH, LEADING DOWN...

... TO WHAT APPEARS, IN THE DIM LIGHT, TO BE ANOTHER LEVEL.
HERE THE EVIDENCE OF RANK NEGLECT IS EVEN WORSE THAN WHAT HE'D SEEN ABOVE. THE RANCID AIR -- LIKE THE CORRUPTED BREATH OF AN ANCIENT TOMB -- CONSTRICTS HIS THROAT WITH FEAR AND REVULSION.
HE FEELS AN ENERGY HERE, A RAW POWER, FILLING HIM WITH HORRID TIMIDITY, MUCH LIKE DURING HIS NIGHTLY FITS OF SELF ABUSE AND PURGATIVE PRAYER.
AND HE REALIZES HE IS NOT ALONE.
WHERE ARE YOU... WHERE ARE YOU?
WHERE ARE YOU... WHERE ARE YOU??
CARLOS FEELS A FORCE CENTERED AROUND THE OLD MAN, EMANATING AS RIPPLES FROM A WATERY ABYSS -- AND STIFLES A SUDDEN, POWERFUL URGE TO ANSWER.
AND CARLOS FEELS THE FORCE PUSH THE OLD MAN TO HIS KNEES, TO SIFT FRANTICALLY THROUGH THE FOUL DEBRIS, UNTIL HIS EFFORTS REVEAL...
A MOST UNUSUAL LITTLE BOX.

WHILE, NEARBY...
HE AIN'T HERE!
HEY, THERE'S A HOLE DOWN HERE! C'MON, WE GOT HIM CORNERED, NOW...
GEEZ, THAT'S THEM!
DON'T HE HEAR THEM COMING? HE'S JUST FOOLIN' WITH THAT DAMNED TOY!
DON'T HE SEE THEM?
YOU HAVE... SUCH SIGHTS TO SHOW...
YO, CARLOS! WHATCHU, WET YOUR PANTS? HA HA!
HEY, I'M TALKING TO...
SHIT! AAA!
CHING
TING
SSFFFK
SFFFIT
YYEEHHUU
CARLOS WATCHES IN SILENT TERROR AS THE BOX SEEMS TO PULL THE OLD MAN INSIDE ITSELF...
...WHILE HIS PURSUERS SCREAM IN RETREAT.
YAAAAA
YEEEAAAA
THE BOX! I SEEN HOW... HE OPENED IT!
I SEEN... I CAN USE THIS...
THANK YOU, LORD, FOR SHOWIN' ME THE WAY THE WAY TO BRING VITO'S GANG DOWN.

THE FOLLOWING NIGHT, IN AN OLD BOAT HOUSE AT PENN'S LANDING, AN EMERGENCY MEETING IS CONVENED.
"...SUPPOSED TO COVER ME LAST NIGHT, JUAN, SO I COULD TAKE OUT VITO..
"...AN' YOU BLEW IT! BUT FOR GRACIA DE DIOS, I WOULDN'T BE HERE! BUT FOR YOUR FUMBLING, NEITHER WOULD VITO!"

MAN, GET OFFA MY BACK-- I HAD THREE OF THEM ON ME...
AND LAST NIGHT WE TOOK OUT TWO MORE OF THEM PERMANENTLY! BUT THIS AIN'T HOW IT'S GOING TO WORK.
I WANT EVERYBODY WORKING TOGETHER-- UNDER ONE RULE, MAN. UNDER ME.

AND LAST NIGHT, I SAW HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.

AW, YOU AND YOUR CRACK DREAMS... WE OUGHT TO JUST MAKE PEACE WITH THEM AN...
THAT'S A SUCKER DEAL! MY PLAN IS HYPE-- THE WAY IT'S MEANT TO BE!

THE WAY IT'S GOT TO BE!
WHAM

LAST NIGHT GOD SHOWED ME THE WAY TO STOP VITO-- TO SHOW EVERYBODY THAT I'M MEANT TO RULE THE GANGS IN THIS CITY.
THAT I'M THE ONLY ONE WITH BALLS ENOUGH. SEND THIS MESSAGE TO VITO...

"TELL HIM TO ASK HIS BOYS ABOUT THE BOX THEY SAW LAST NIGHT. TELL HIM I'M CHALLENGING HIM TO DECIDE THIS TURF DEAL, ONCE AND FOR ALL, MANO A MANO..."
...THINK YOU GUYS ARE ALL GOIN' DIRSO ON ME.
WE KNOW WHAT WE SAW. THAT BOX... IT'S DEADLY, VITO.
IT'S EVIL-- SPIT WHITE-HOT OUT OF HELL ITSELF.
CAN'T BELIEVE YOU GUYS! POPE CARLOS PLAYS SOME CHEAP TRICK--YELLS "BOO" AND YOU RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
NOW HE'S PLANNING TO TRY AND RUN THE SAME SCAM ON ME. BUT I AIN'T SO EASILY SPOOKED!
HE WANTS A CONTEST, HE'S GOT IT--ON OUR TURF, WITH ALL MY BOYS, EVERYBODY WITH HEAVY HARDWARE.
RONNIE, MICK, SCOPE OUT THE AREA BEFORE THE MEET, MAKE SURE WE AIN'T WALKIN' INTO NO TRAP.
FIRST SIGN OF A CROSS, DON'T NO VULTURES LEAVE THAT TUNNEL ALIVE!

LATER, IN THE OLD SUBWAY, BOTH GANGS LISTEN UNEASILY AS CARLOS PROPOSES THE MYSTERIOUS BOX TO BE THE WEAPON IN THEIR DUEL.
A SIMPLE PUZZLE, SEEMING TO OFFER A PEACEABLE VICTORY TO THE ONE WHO SOLVES IT...
...ALBEIT A SHORT-LIVED ONE.
VITO CAN FEEL THE STENCH OF BETRAYAL IN THE AIR, BUT IS TRAPPED BY TRIBAL HONOR-- TO REFUSE THE CHALLENGE NOW WOULD COST HIM HIS LEADERSHIP.
TO CARLOS, IT IS THE SCENT OF THE KILL -- FOR HE REMEMBERS CLEARLY THE SOLUTION HE OBSERVED IN THE OLD MAN'S HANDS.
AND MORE, CARLOS KNOWS HOW TO AVOID IT.
THE STAKES ARE SIMPLE, VITO. WE TAKE TURNS. THE ONE WITH THE BRAINS -- AND THE GUTS -- TO AVOID OPENIN' THE BOX OWNS THE STREETS.
JUST A FEW ROUNDS -- OF RUSSIAN ROULETTE, BUT WITH A TWIST -- THE BOX GOIN' OFF, BLOODY HOOKS AND ALL IN THE LOSER'S KISSER. JUST LIKE YOUR BOYS TOLD YA -- OR, DON'T YOU TRUST YOUR OWN MEN?
SO, WHAT D'YA SAY, VITO? YOU MAN ENOUGH, OR NO?!
OKAY. YOU GOT IT. LET'S DO IT.
BRING OUT THE BOX!

AND JUST TO SHOW YOU I'M A SPORT, I'LL GO FIRST.
MAYBE YOU SAW SOMETHIN' DOWN HERE LAST NIGHT MY BOYS DIDN'T?
SO WE'LL PLAY YOUR DAMNED GAME... BUT MY WAY!
WE PLAY BLINDFOLDED-- TO MAKE SURE THIS IS LEVEL-- OR WE DON'T PLAY AT ALL!
UNLESS YOU'RE AFRAID OF THE DARK?! OR IS THIS WHAT THEY CALL... A CRISIS OF FAITH?
YOU... YOU GOT IT VITO. BLIND IT IS...
...BUT THE ONLY CRISIS HERE IS GONNA BE YOURS.
HIS BRAVADO RINGS HOLLOW. FOR, BLIND, HE CANNOT BE CERTAIN OF EACH MOVE-- HIS EDGE IS LOST.
THE BIZARRE MECHANISM PASSES WITHOUT INCIDENT FROM ONE TERROR-STRUCK COMBATANT TO THE OTHER...
...EACH DESPERATELY HOPING THE OTHER'S TURN WILL BE THE LAST.
EACH ASSUMED THAT ONE MORE WILL BE...

SUDDENLY, CARLOS FEELS A PRESENCE, AN ENERGY -- AS IF ANSWERING HIS PRAYERS.
A RIVER OF VISIONS -- SEDUCTIVE IMAGES OF THE DUEL...
...AND THE TELLING MOVEMENTS OF THE BOX IN BOTH HIS HANDS AND VITO'S.
CARLOS IS SURE GOD IS GUIDING HIM, RIGHT TO FATE'S DOOR -- TO HIS DESTINY TO RULE.
HIS MIND'S EYE FILLS NOW, WITH A WINDOW ON THE FUTURE.
POWER.
MONEY.
FREEDOM.
FREE -- AT LAST -- OF VITO AND HIS DAMNABLE NIGHTLORDS.
AND ALL COMING ON THE HEELS OF THIS ONE NIGHT'S -- EASY PICKINS...
N-N-NO!
YEAH, MAN! WRONG MOVE -- YOU LOSE, HOMBRE!
AND FOR CARLOS, THE FUTURE IS CLEARLY HIS...
...FOR THE TAKING.
BUT SOMETHING WAS WRONG! THE HOOKS THAT WERE SUPPOSED TO SHRED VITO INTO MEATY LITTLE BITS HAD NOT APPEARED.
INSTEAD, HE FELT A PANDEMONIUM OF ENERGY; A MALEVOLENT AURA: SAME AS THE ONE CENTERED AROUND -- THE STRANGE OLD MAN.

AND RIDING ON THIS DARK WAVE OF FORCE, TURNING AN UNEXPECTED PAGE IN CARLOS' INFINITE PLAN ARE SOME OF HELL'S FINEST COMMANDOES.
OH, SHIT!
RUN! RUN, DAMNIT!!
LET'S GET OUT--
CAN'T! THEY'RE BLOCKING THE WAY OUT!
TRAPPING VITO'S BOYS WHILE CARLOS SPEEDS TO FREEDOM.
WHAT THE HELL WERE THOSE -- THINGS.
WHO CARES! WE WON! JUST LIKE I TOLD YA-- WE'RE TOP STREETS, NOW, KEEP MOVIN!
BUT AS THEY REACH THE WORKMAN'S EXIT THE PATH TO FREEDOM AND FORTUNE IS BLOCKED...
... BY ONE SMALL OBSTACLE.
CARLOS-- TH-THE BOX!
DIDN'T WE LEAVE IT?
C'MON... IT WON'T HURT NOBODY.
WE DIDN'T OPEN IT--WE ACED THE DUEL! GOD GAVE ME VISIONS!
THIS BOX IS EVIL; IT HAS NO POWER OVER US.
IN THE LORD'S NAME I DENY IT-- SEND IT BACK TO DIABLO.
UNLEASHING ITS HORRORS AGAIN.
WH-WHAT ARE YOU?
THE BOX SPARKS AT HIS TOUCH, OPENING THE DOORS AGAIN.

WE ARE WHOM YOU'VE SUMMONED.
WE ARE THE CENOBITES.
WE WILL NOT BE DENIED!
NO! I WON GOD SHOWED ME THE WAY. IT'S MY--
--DESTINY? FOOL! WHEN YOU PRAY TO DARKNESS, IT IS DARKNESS THAT ANSWERS!
AND YOUR DESTINY-- IS HELL!
YOU CAME TO SEE YOUR ENEMY TORN TO BITS-- BUT YOUR MEAGER HUMAN SENSES HAVE SORELY MISLED YOU...
THE OLD MAN YOU FIRST SAW OPEN THE BOX WAS ITS GUARDIAN: THE POWER SURROUNDING HIM WAS OURS -- IS OURS!
...HE FAILED US IN PERMITTING THE MECHANISM TO FALL INTO DISREPAIR-- AND HAD TO BE TAUGHT-- A LESSON!
BUT TONIGHT, THROUGH THE VILE, UNDISCIPLINED INTENSITY OF YOUR MUTUAL HATRED AND MANIA FOR POWER-- THE BOX HAS BEEN REALIGNED TO ITS PURPOSE.
OH, CARLOS! WHEN WILL YOU LEARN-- ALL THAT GLITTER IS NOT GOLD?
WE DO HAVE MUCH TO TEACH YOU-- DON'T WE?
BUT FIRST, WE CELEBRATE THE REBIRTH OF THIS LEMARCHAND BOX--
FOR WHICH WE ARE COMPELLED TO SHOW OUR GRATITUDE-- TO SHOW YOU THE WAY TO OUR GOD--
--TO LEVIATHAN.

BUT- BUT I DIDN'T OPEN THE BOX! IT WASN'T MY HAND!
OH, BUT CARLOS-- IT IS NOT THE HANDS THAT CALL US.
...IT IS-- DESIRE!

THE END

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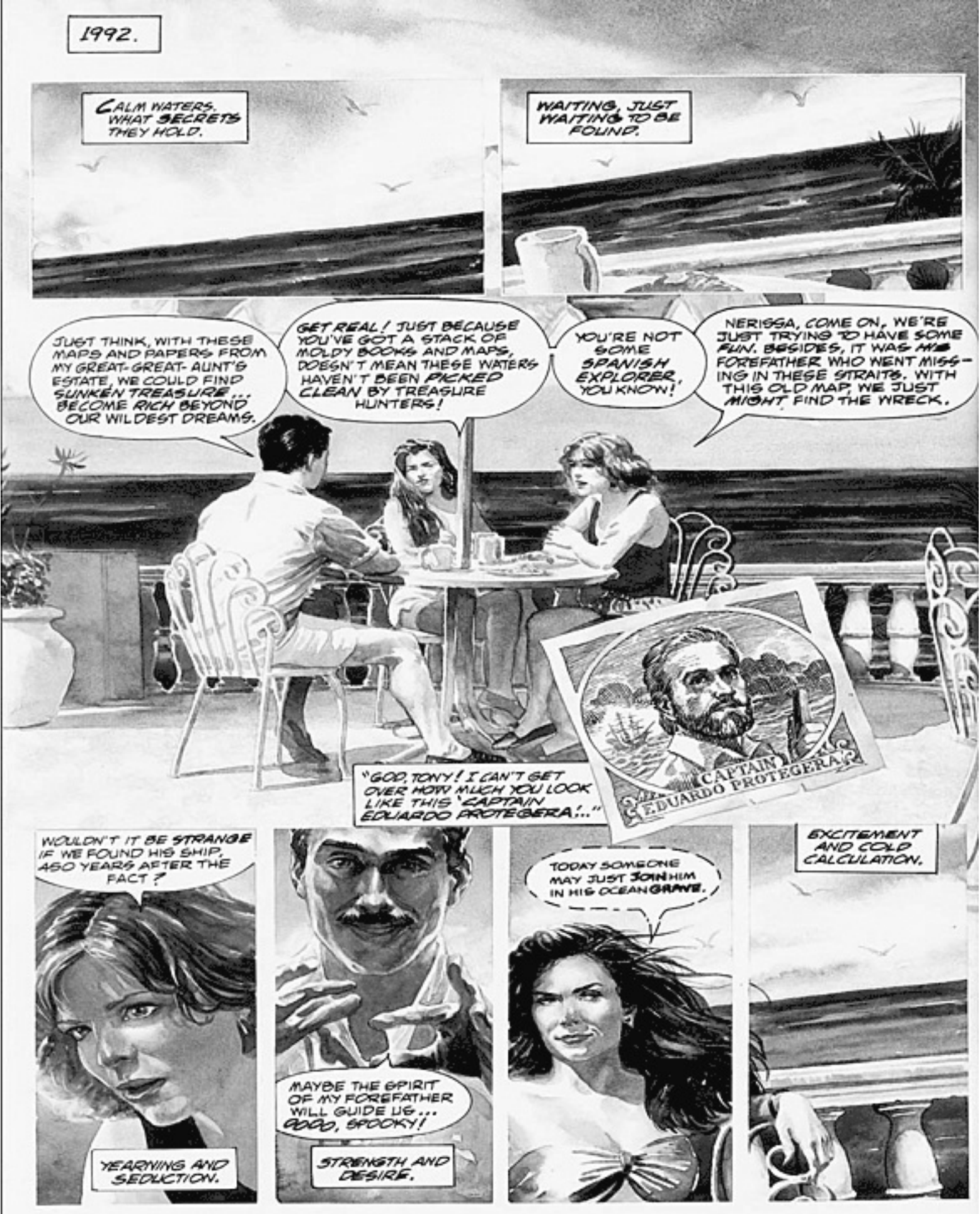
JULY 1528. STRAITS OF FLORIDA.
GREY AND ANGRY WATERS, SKIES ENGORGED WITH VIOLENT STORM. IT IS HERE THAT THE FUERZA DE DIOS FIGHTS A TENSE BATTLE.
IN THESE BLUE DEPTHS LIE HELL
SEVEN MONTHS BEFORE, IN THE CALM HARBOR OF SAN GERMAN, PUERTO RICO, CAPTAIN EDUARDO PROTEGERA WAS CALLED TO SEE THE GOVERNOR...
...THERE HAD BEEN A CHANGE IN HIS ORDERS.
SO YOU SEE, CAPTAIN PROTEGERA, THE ONLY CHANGE IN YOUR INSTRUCTIONS IS THAT PADRE DE BOBADO WILL BE ACCOMPANYING YOU...
...TO PROVIDE COUNSEL AND GUIDANCE FOR THE MEN OF GOVERNOR De NARVAEZ IN FLORIDA.
"GOD-FEARING MEN, CAPTAIN. THE PADRE WILL GUIDE THEM IN THEIR JOURNEY OF FAITH."
A JOURNEY PERHAPS, BUT A LABYRINTHINE PATH TO A DARK AND DANGEROUS GATE.
Lurene Haines writer
Ray Lago artist
Gaspar letterer

TODAY, THE HEAT OF THE TROPICS MAKES LOVERS BURN.
IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL HERE. THIS HOLIDAY WAS A TERRIFIC IDEA.
YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE FIRE. WILDFIRE.
SOMETIMES, WITH THE VERY HEAT OF HELL.
I HATE ALL THIS SNEAKING AROUND. WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING. IT HAS TO LOOK LIKE AN ACCIDENT THOUGH, IF WE WANT TO KEEP THE INSURANCE MONEY.
THEN THIS IS THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY, AND TOMORROW'S DIVE IS THE PERFECT TIME-- A DIVING ACCIDENT!
IT'LL BE SO EASY. WE'LL HIDE THE BODY UNDERWATER, AND WITHOUT EVIDENCE, WHAT CAN THEY SAY?
A SIMPLE THING, MURDER.
JUST REMEMBER TO PULL OFF THE MASK AND REGULATOR. A GUARANTEED DISTRACTION!
SIMPLE REASONS, SIMPLE METHODS.
I'LL SEE YOU BOTH AT BREAKFAST TOMORROW.
A VIOLENT ENDING, YET SO ELEGANT.
A SIMPLE SIN.

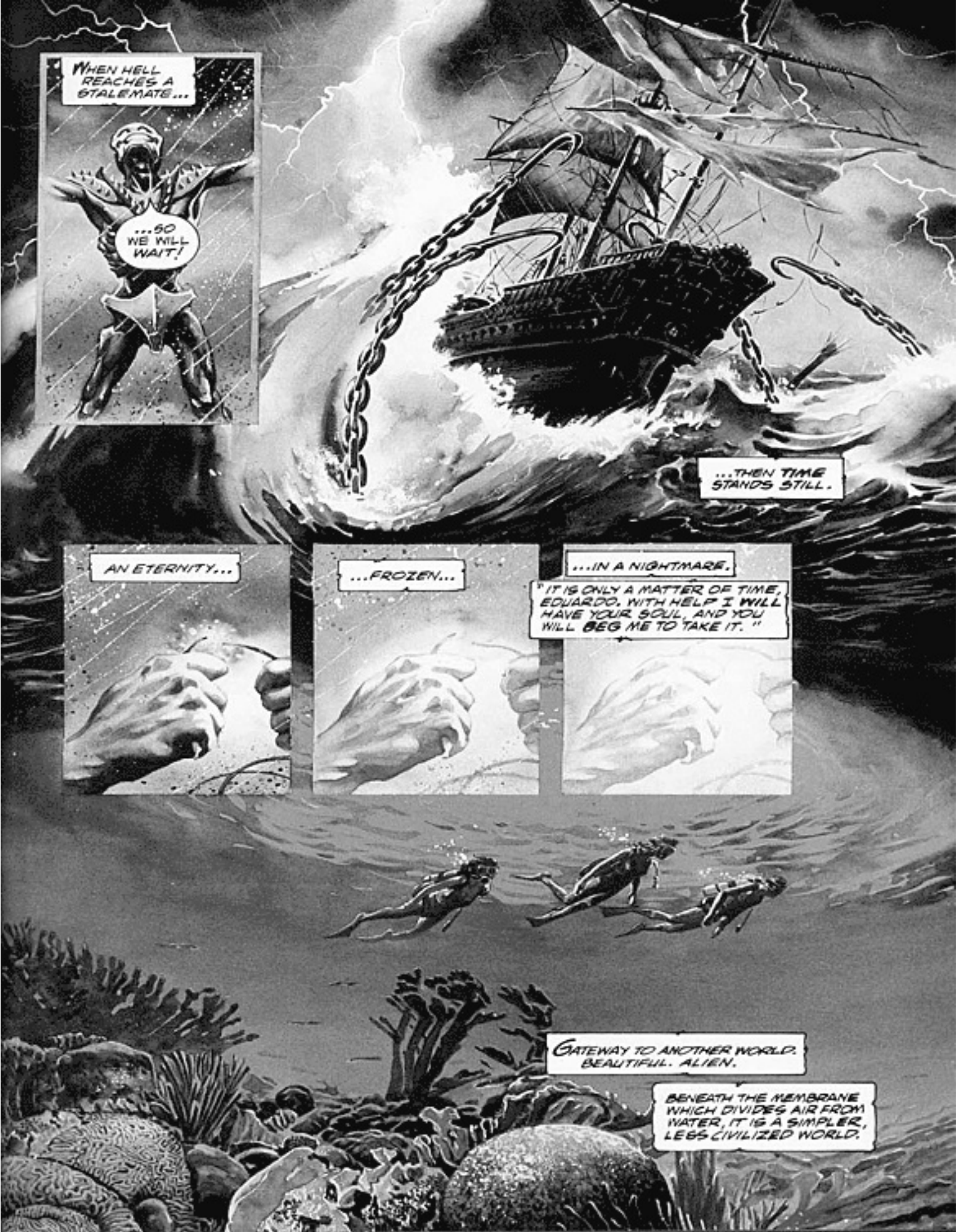
1528.
THESE ARE SOME OF HIS PAPERS, SIR. SOMETHING IS VERY WRONG. THE PADRE, HE...HE CHANTS AND MOANS, AND NOW WILL NOT EVEN LEAVE HIS CABIN.
THANK YOU, MR. DIEAGO. PLEASE BRING THEM OVER TO MY DESK.
"PADRE DE BOGADO, HE IS NO MYSTERY. JUST A TWISTED MAN."
"MR. DIEAGO, I WANT TO SEE HIM. BREAK DOWN HIS DOOR IF YOU MUST. I HAVE MANY QUESTIONS FOR HIM."
"MOST IMPORTANTLY, JUST WHAT IS HE ATTEMPTING?"
FRETJANA, ISHTAKYA, MENYATAY...
IN THE STEAMY DARKNESS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE QUESTION IS NOT REALLY ABOUT WHAT HE DOES...
...BUT WHO HE CALLS...
...AND WHAT THEY WILL DO WHEN THEY ARRIVE.
AND TO WHOM.

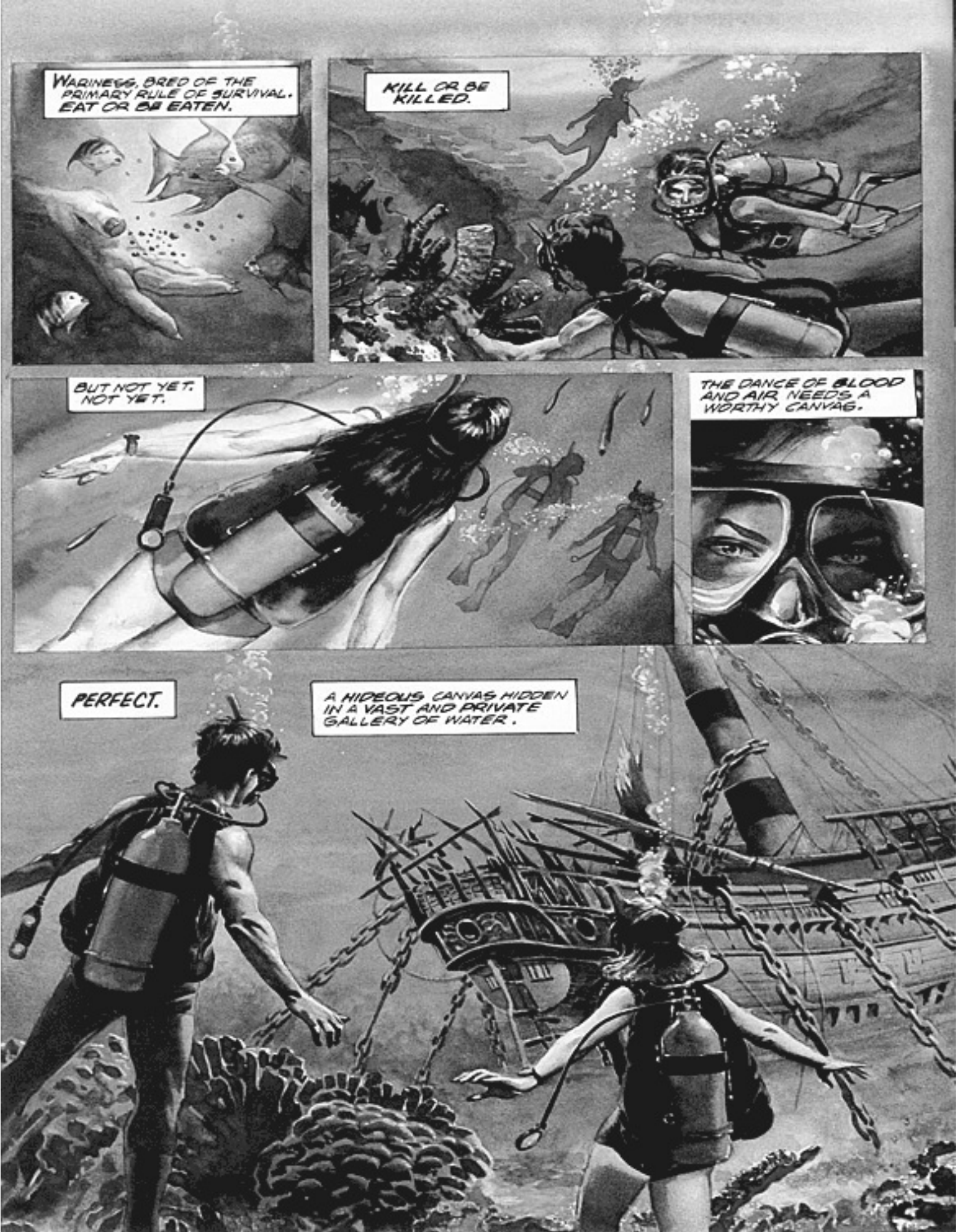
LLAMBDYAE, PROSTAKTA THE GATEWAY STANDS OPEN, THE SHEEP LIE AT YOUR FEET. ISHTAKYA, ISHTAKYA.
COME. WE WAIT. I WAIT.
AAAAGHHH
PADRE! PADRE! OPEN THE DOOR!
PADRE!
YES! YES! IT IS HERE...
I AM DELIGHTED THAT YOU WILL BE JOINING US...
...WE HAVE MANY PLEASURES TO SHARE.
Padre Dios, Madre Dios, preservoy de diable...
CAPTAIN! AAAGH...
THE SHEEP MAY COME, BUT NOT ALWAYS WILLINGLY.


1992.
CALM WATERS. WHAT SECRETS THEY HOLD.
WAITING, JUST WAITING TO BE FOUND.
JUST THINK, WITH THESE MAPS AND PAPERS FROM MY GREAT-GREAT-AUNT'S ESTATE, WE COULD FIND SUNKEN TREASURE... BECOME RICH BEYOND OUR WILDEST DREAMS.
GET REAL! JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT A STACK OF MOLDY BOOKS AND MAPS, DOESN'T MEAN THESE WATERS HAVEN'T BEEN PICKED CLEAN BY TREASURE HUNTERS!
YOU'RE NOT SOME SPANISH EXPLORER, YOU KNOW!
NERISSA, COME ON, WE'RE JUST TRYING TO HAVE SOME FUN. BESIDES, IT WAS MY FOREFATHER WHO WENT MISSING IN THESE STRAITS. WITH THIS OLD MAP, WE JUST MIGHT FIND THE WRECK.
"GOD, TONY! I CAN'T GET OVER HOW MUCH YOU LOOK LIKE THIS 'CAPTAIN EDUARDO PROTEGERA'..."
CAPTAIN EDUARDO PROTEGERA
WOULDN'T IT BE STRANGE IF WE FOUND HIS SHIP, 450 YEARS AFTER THE FACT?
YEARNING AND SEDUCTION.
MAYBE THE SPIRIT OF MY FOREFATHER WILL GUIDE US... OOOO, SPOOKY!
STRENGTH AND DESIRE.
TODAY SOMEONE MAY JUST JOIN HIM IN HIS OCEAN GRAVE.
EXCITEMENT AND COLD CALCULATION.

AAAAGH!
MY GOD!
HOW COULD I HAVE KNOWN? THIS MUST BE STOPPED!
FIRE. THE PERFECT WAY TO SEND HELL BACK WHERE IT BELONGS. I MUST FIND THE STRENGTH, GOD, HELP ME!
JOIN THE FUSES! THE SHIP, THIS NIGHTMARE! EVERYTHING WILL BE GONE!
HELL IS ALWAYS AMONG US...
...IT SINGS ALOUD IN OUR ACTIONS...
...DROWNING OUT THE CRY OF THE SOUL.
BACK TO HELL! WITH FIRE, I CLEANSE THE EARTH AND WATERS, FOREVER...
SKREEE
MY GOD! MY GOD! FORGIVE ME!

A BEAUTIFUL DAY FOR A DIVE. CLEAR SKIES, AZURE WATERS.
A BEAUTIFUL DAY TO DIE.
OKAY, EVERYBODY READY?
READY AS I'LL EVER BE!
JUST A SEC...
LAST ONE IN'S A DEAD DUCK!
BEAUTIFUL, WARM, BLUE WATERS. DOORWAY TO THE WORLD OF THE SEA. A GATEWAY.
ELSEWHEN.
WE WERE CALLED! WE CAME! SUCH A SIMPLE GESTURE, SO FULL OF DARK OBSESSION. EXCEPT FOR YOU, EDUARDO...
A GATEWAY TO HELL.
I CANNOT MOVE! MY GOD, NOO...
...A PITIFUL FLAME IN A GROWING NIGHT. I TASTE YOUR FEAR AND DESIRE LIKE A SUDDEN GLUT OF BLOOD AND WINE.
YOU ALONE ARE NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO WIN THIS BATTLE, YET YOUR DESIRE IS SOMETHING EVEN I CANNOT FIGHT WITHOUT HELP...


WHEN HELL REACHES A STALEMATE...
...SO WE WILL WAIT!
...THEN TIME STANDS STILL.
AN ETERNITY...
...FROZEN...
...IN A NIGHTMARE.
"IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME, EDUARDO. WITH HELP I WILL HAVE YOUR SOUL, AND YOU WILL BEG ME TO TAKE IT."
GATEWAY TO ANOTHER WORLD. BEAUTIFUL. ALIEN.
BENEATH THE MEMBRANE WHICH DIVIDES AIR FROM WATER, IT IS A SIMPLER, LESS CIVILIZED WORLD.

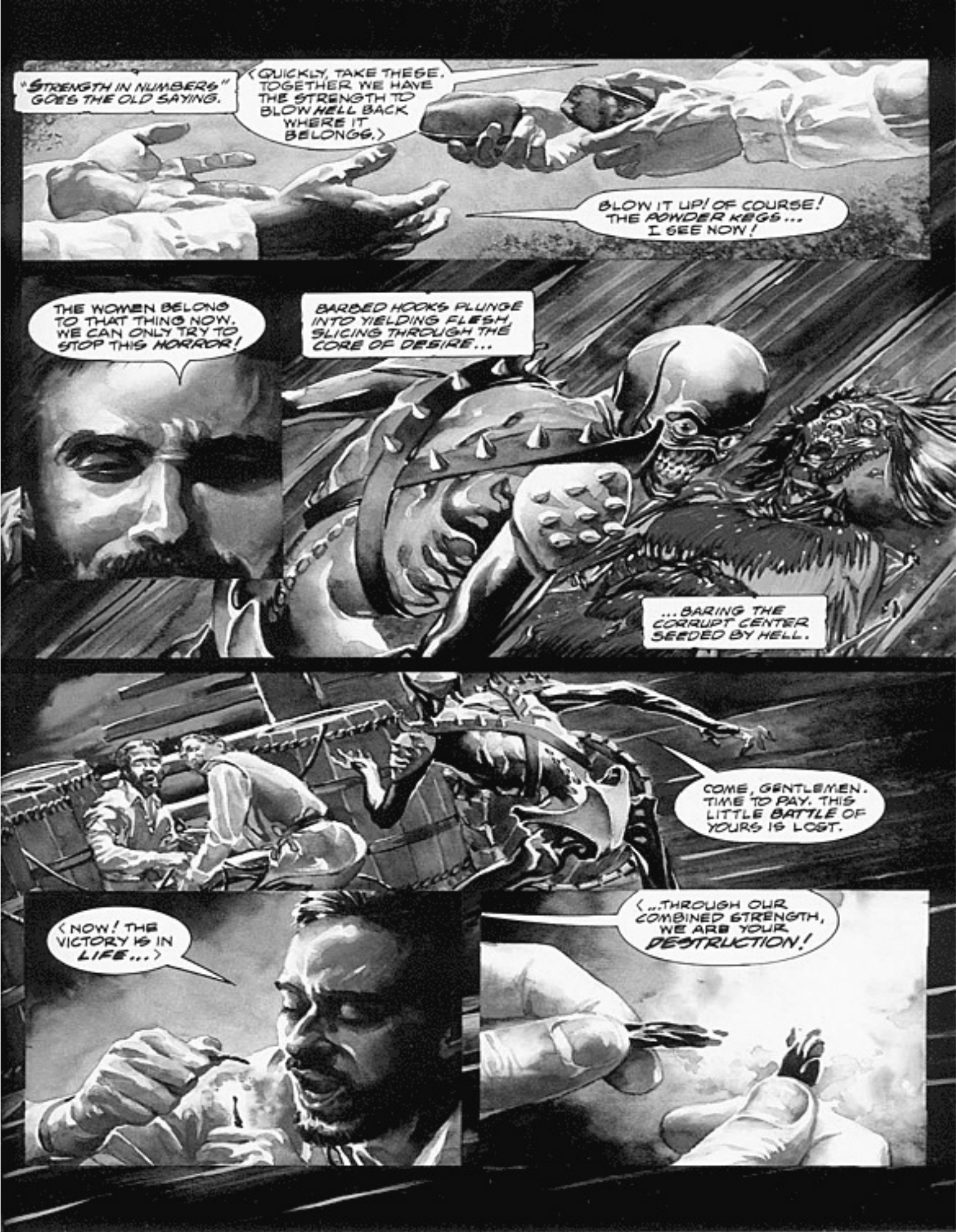

WARINESS, BREED OF THE PRIMARY RULE OF SURVIVAL. EAT OR BE EATEN.
KILL OR BE KILLED.
BUT NOT YET. NOT YET.
THE DANCE OF BLOOD AND AIR NEEDS A WORTHY CANVAS.
PERFECT.
A HIDEOUS CANVAS HIDDEN IN A VAST AND PRIVATE GALLERY OF WATER.

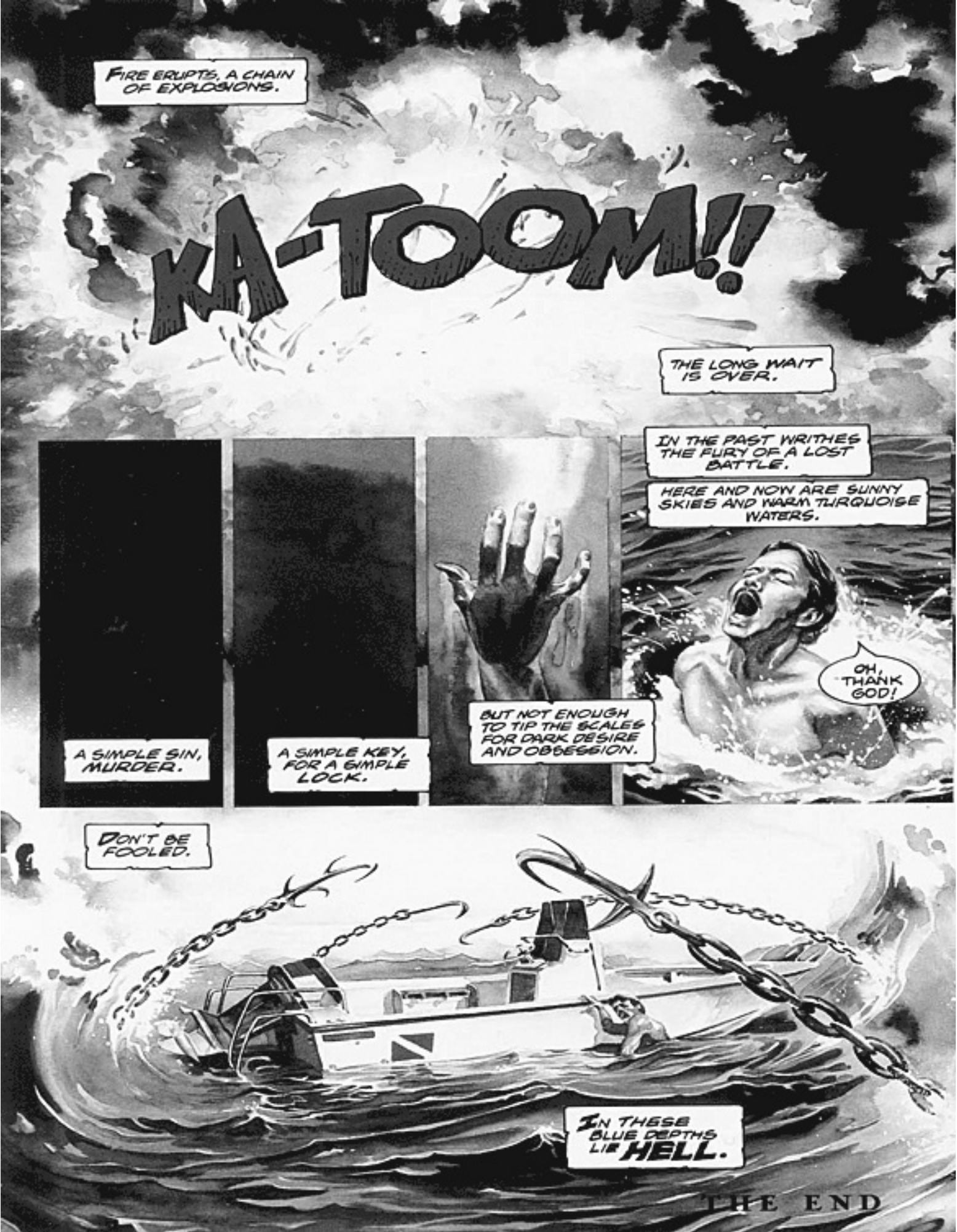
IT IS CLEAR THAT NO ONE HAS EVER FOUND THIS STRANGE AND TERRIBLE WRECK.
NO HUMAN TOUCH HAS DISTRIBUTED THE SILT AND DEBRIS OF CENTURIES.
HERE AND NOW. THE PERFECT TIME. THE PERFECT PLAN.
THE PERFECT PLACE TO SAY GOOD-BYE.
FOREVER.
NOW THE GATE WILL BE OPENED ONCE AGAIN...
...AND TIME BEGINS TO FLOW.

SLIDING ACROSS CENTURIES...
...OF PLACE AND TIME...
...INTO A HELLBOUND NIGHTMARE.
WHAT'S HAPPENED?
SWEET, CLARE. LOVELY, NERISSA. NOW. NOW THE SCALES TIP IN MY FAVOR.
WHAT! I...!
AAAA...
...OOO! UH...
YES, NERISSA...
BASTARD!
WHA...!
uh...
Madre Dios! MOVE!
UUNH!
MUUUUUU...
GO BACK TO HELL!
KRAK!
MUUUUUU...
YOUR DESIRES ARE PITIABLE! SO TRIVIAL IN THE FACE OF THE GREAT PAIN THAT AWAITS YOU. YOU WILL NOT STOP US.
HELP ME! MY GOD. WE MUST BLOW UP THIS...THIS STRONG-HOLD OF MADNESS!
I DON'T... I CAN'T UNDERSTAND YOU.
IS THAT... SPANISH?
YOU LOOK LIKE... PROTEGERA! MY ANCESTOR?! MY GOD. WHAT IN HELL IS GOING ON?!

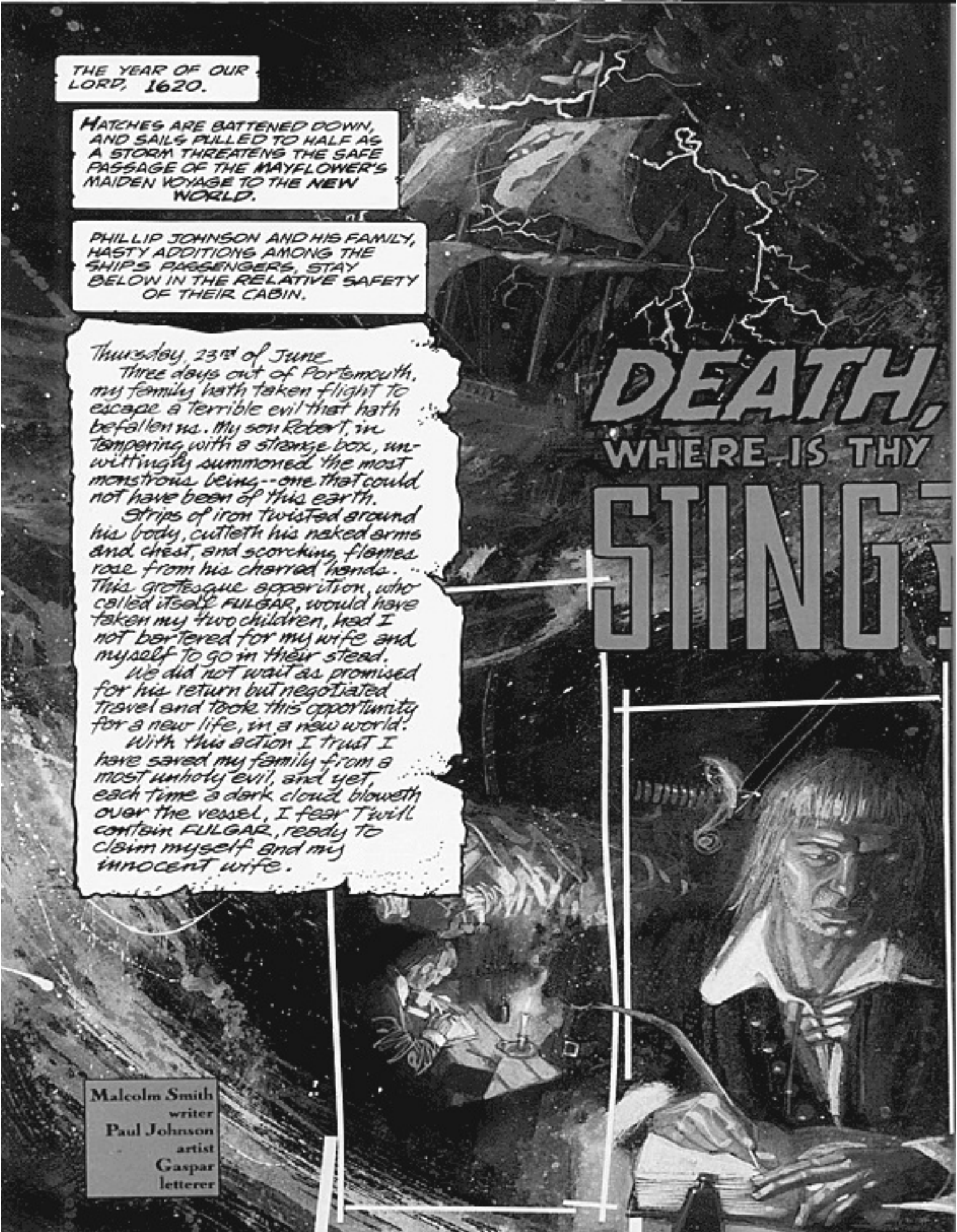
A MAD LANDSCAPE. INCOMPREHENSIBLE.
HUUUU...
ILLUMINATED ONLY BY PAIN AND DISBELIEF.
CLARE. YOU HAVE GREATLY DISAPPOINTED US. WHERE NOW IS YOUR CORE OF TWISTED YEARNING?
HUUUU...
AND HORROR.
WHAT YOU SEE HERE IS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE GLORIOUS SIGHTS THAT AWAIT YOU!
GAAACK...
"...THE THINGS YOU WILL SEE."
SCHLOPP
THIS IS TOO UNREAL! CLARE! MY GOD, CLARE!
PLEASE, PLEASE! WE MUST DESTROY THIS SHIP! HELP ME!

BLOOMING REALIZATION. THE NIGHTMARE IS REAL.
AND NERISSA, LOVELY, EVIL NERISSA. SO MUCH POTENTIAL. OUR LITTLE WEAPON AGAINST THIS FOOLISH SPANIARD. YET YOU HAVE FAILED US.
OHHH...
FOUR HUNDRED YEARS, THE TIES OF FAMILY BLOODLINES...
YOUR PETTY INTERFERENCE WILL MEAN NOTHING.
"I WILL WIN THIS BATTLE, AND TAKE WHAT RIGHTFULLY BELONGS TO HELL. THERE WILL BE NO MORE COMPROMISE!"
...AND THE STRENGTH PROVIDED BY DESPERATION AND THE RIGHTEOUS HEART.
<PLEASE! LIVES DEPEND ON US! WE MUST STOP IT, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!>
AHHH...
IS IT THE KEY?
EDUARDO, TOGETHER. TOGETHER WE CAN FIGHT THIS THING!
<THE FIRE IS THE KEY. QUICKLY!>
I UNDERSTAND! THE FIRE!


"STRENGTH IN NUMBERS" GOES THE OLD SAYING.
〈QUICKLY, TAKE THESE. TOGETHER WE HAVE THE STRENGTH TO BLOW HELL BACK WHERE IT BELONGS.〉
BLOW IT UP! OF COURSE! THE POWDER KEGS... I SEE NOW!
THE WOMEN BELONG TO THAT THING NOW. WE CAN ONLY TRY TO STOP THIS HORROR!
BARBED HOOKS PLUNGE INTO YIELDING FLESH, SLICING THROUGH THE CORE OF DESIRE...
...BARING THE CORRUPT CENTER SEEDED BY HELL.
COME, GENTLEMEN. TIME TO PAY. THIS LITTLE BATTLE OF YOURS IS LOST.
〈NOW! THE VICTORY IS IN LIFE...〉
〈...THROUGH OUR COMBINED STRENGTH, WE ARE YOUR DESTRUCTION!


FIRE ERUPTS, A CHAIN OF EXPLOSIONS.
KA-TOOM!!
THE LONG WAIT IS OVER.
IN THE PAST WRITHES THE FURY OF A LOST BATTLE.
HERE AND NOW ARE SUNNY SKIES AND WARM TURQUOISE WATERS.
OH, THANK GOD!
A SIMPLE SIN, MURDER.
A SIMPLE KEY, FOR A SIMPLE LOCK.
BUT NOT ENOUGH TO TIP THE SCALES FOR DARK DESIRE AND OBSESSION.
DON'T BE FOOLED.
IN THESE BLUE DEPTHS LIE HELL.
THE END

A SOHO LOFT IN MANHATTAN'S LOWER EAST SIDE.
BEHIND A BARRICADED DOOR, DANIEL JOHNSON CELEBRATES THE DAY HE'S DREADED ALL HIS LIFE.
HIS 25TH BIRTHDAY.
THAT'S THE DAY THAT EVERY OTHER MEMBER OF THE JOHNSON FAMILY HAS DISAPPEARED.
HAPPY 25th BIRTHDAY
I STILL WISH WE COULD'VE HAD A PARTY.
I'VE BEEN ACTING CRAZY HAVEN'T I?
IN A WORD? YES.
HONEY, THERE'S NO WAY YOU'RE GONNA BECOME MISSING LIKE THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY-- NOT WITH ME AROUND!
BUT IF YOU DO LEAVE ME, I WANT THIS BACK. HAPPY BIRTHDAY.
IT'S BEAUTIFUL! THANKS FOR HUMORING ME, KATIE! GOD, I LOVE YOU SO MUCH.
I LOVE YOU TOO.
WHAT'S BETWEEN US IS FOREVER KATIE, YOU KNOW THAT.
SHE DOESN'T NOTICE HER HUSBAND'S BIRTHMARK IS UNUSUALLY FLORID TODAY. ALMOST FRESH.
OH, NEARLY FORGOT... SWEETIE, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD A MIDDLE NAME.
I DON'T-- WELL, NOT ANYMORE. IT WAS MY FATHER'S NAME. AFTER HE AND MY MOTHER DISAPPEARED...
... WHEN I WAS SENT TO THE FOSTER HOME, I'D SWORE I'D NEVER USE IT AGAIN.
WHY?
THIS CAME FOR YOU TODAY.
STRANGE, I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS A PERSON ALIVE THAT KNEW MY MIDDLE NAME.


THE YEAR OF OUR LORD, 1620.
HATCHES ARE BATTENED DOWN, AND SAILS PULLED TO HALF AS A STORM THREATENS THE SAFE PASSAGE OF THE MAYFLOWER'S MAIDEN VOYAGE TO THE NEW WORLD.
PHILLIP JOHNSON AND HIS FAMILY, HASTY ADDITIONS AMONG THE SHIPS PASSENGERS, STAY BELOW IN THE RELATIVE SAFETY OF THEIR CABIN.
Thursday, 23rd of June
Three days out of Portsmouth, my family hath taken flight to escape a terrible evil that hath befallen us. My son Robert, in tampering with a strange box, unwittingly summoned the most monstrous being--one that could not have been of this earth.
Strips of iron twisted around his body, cutteth his naked arms and chest, and scorching flames rose from his charred hands. This grotesque apparition, who called itself FULGAR, would have taken my two children, had I not bartered for my wife and myself to go in their stead.
We did not wait as promised for his return but negotiated travel and took this opportunity for a new life, in a new world.
With this action I trust I have saved my family from a most unholy evil, and yet, each time a dark cloud bloweth over the vessel, I fear T'will contain FULGAR, ready to claim myself and my innocent wife.
DEATH,
WHERE IS THY
STING?
Malcolm Smith
writer
Paul Johnson
artist
Gaspar
letterer

SIX WEEKS AFTER DANIEL JOHNSON'S... DISAPPEARANCE.
MANHATTAN, E-TRAIN SUBWAY, HEADED FOR THE BRONX.
VERA WYSHACK, ONE OF THE HARROWERS -- SEVEN FOLLOWERS OF THE GODDESS MORTE MAMMÉ -- SPIES A WOMAN WITH A PUZZLE-BOX. IMMEDIATELY SHE UNDERSTANDS WHY A SUBWAY TOKEN HAD MYSTERIOUSLY APPEARED IN HER POCKET THAT MORNING.
THIS DAMN THING HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH HIM LEAVING, I KNOW IT!
ALMOST... JUST A LITTLE MORE...
YOU DON'T WANNA OPEN THAT, SISTER!
IT'D TAKE YOU SOMEWHERE YOU WOULDN'T LIKE.
WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS? MY HUSBAND... HUSBAND?
LET ME GUESS -- HE'S DISAPPEARED?
LAST NIGHT. HOW DID YOU KNOW? I WENT TO BED, BUT HE STAYED UP, PLAYING WITH THIS BOX. IN THE MORNING HE WAS GONE --
UNHUH, AND I BET I KNOW WHERE HE WENT TOO. IF HE'S JUST GONE IN, IT MAY NOT BE TOO LATE.
VERA'S BOOMERANG -- BLESSED WITH POWERS FROM MORTÉ MAMMÉ.
ITS RAZOR-SHARP EDGES ABLE TO CUT THROUGH ONE REALITY AND INTO ANOTHER...
...MAKING HELL JUST A FOOTSTEP AWAY...
OH MY GOD! IF DANIEL'S DOWN THERE THEN I'M GOING WITH YOU!
FINE! I'M WARNING YOU THOUGH, THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE A STROLL IN THE PARK.
AHHHHHH!
HANG ON!
HOLY SHIT!

June, 1621
Our life among the Pilgrims flourishes. Though the petty comforts of England are duly missed, our accomplishments here--the log cabin, our field of planted crops, our congenial tradings with the Indians--bring us great satisfaction. Yet many a night I still awaketh from the same infernal dream of the demon Fulgar, returning for the debt as yet unrepaid.
TONIGHT, IT IS NOT A DREAM.
THE BARGAIN HAS NOT BEEN FORGOTTEN.
BEFORE THE FIRST LIGHT OF DAWN, THE HOUSE IS BURNED TO THE GROUND, AND PHILIP JOHNSON AND HIS WIFE GRACE ARE SNATCHED FROM THE SIGHT OF MAN, OR GOD.
YOU POOR ORPHANS!
THIS IS YOUR HOME NOW.
NATHANIEL!
THESE MARKS--THEY WILL NOT BE REMOVED!
TIS' BURNED INTO THEIR SKIN, AS IF T' WERE BRANDED!

VERA WYSHAK IS DISCOVERING THAT HELL HAS A THOUSAND FACES, SOME QUITE BENIGN IN THEIR APPEARANCE.
THIS ONE SEEMS BLISSFUL...
A ROLLING FIELD OF CLOVER IN A HIDDEN VALLEY.
IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL.
STAY CLOSE, THERE AIN'T NO WAY THIS PLACE IS AS HARMLESS AS IT LOOKS.
MY HUSBAND ISN'T HERE. I MUST'VE BEEN CRAZY TO BELIEVE YOU!
DON'T MOVE! THERE'S A BEE ON YOU LIKE NO BEE I'VE EVER SEEN!
THE SWEET SMELL OF HONEY PERVADES THE AIR...
SICKLY SWEET.
A FLICK OF THE BOOMERANG SAVES KATIE FROM A DEADLY STING.
THIS SUCKER IS ALL STINGER! AND LOOK AT THE DIAMOND SHAPE ON IT! TIME FOR MY OWN LITTLE CENOBITE LITMUS TEST.
VERA USES ANOTHER OF HER GODDESS GIVEN WEAPONS: SALIVA THAT BURNS ALL THINGS CENOBITICAL.
JUST WHAT I THOUGHT!
CENOBITE BEES
FOLLOW THAT SWARM!

STRANGE MOANS,
FROM BLOATED LIPS,
BETRAY THE HIDDEN AGONIES OF THE FIELD.
MY GOD! THEY'RE ALL OVER HER!
DON'T GET TOO CLOSE! THE WHOLE FIELD'S FULL OF THESE POOR SOULS!
MOAN
WEEP
WEEP
MOAN
WEEP
THEY ALL LOOK STRANGELY FAMILIAR.
OH MY GOD!
DANNY! THEY ALL LOOK LIKE DANNY!
DANNY?! PLEASE GOD NO!
KATE?
STAY AWAY! THE BEES--THEIR STING--MORE PAIN THAN I'VE EVER KNOWN.

OH GOD, NOT LONG NOW MY LOVE. NOT LONG.
MMMMMM, DOESN'T LOOK SO GOOD.
CAN'T YOU JUST HACK THE ROOTS AWAY?
I CAN TRY-- BUT THEY SEEM TO BE PART OF HIS BODY NOW.
NO, PLEASE! AAHHHHHH!
THEY'RE ALL CONNECTED TO ONE ANOTHER UNDERGROUND. IF I KEEP CUTTING, THEY'LL ALL BLEED TO DEATH.
Nooooo!
AAAHHHH!
JUST HANG ON A LITTLE LONGER DANNY--WE'LL THINK OF SOMETHING.
"THE ROOTS...
"ALL SEEM TO LEAD...
..."TOWARDS THAT TREE."

THEY'RE ENTWINED IN THE HOLLOW OF A MASSIVE OAK. PHILIP AND GRACE JOHNSON, THE FOUNDERS OF THE JOHNSON DYNASTY.
WHOEVER YOU ARE-- GO AWAY-- IF BEEKEEPER FINDS YOU-- HE'LL MAKE YOU ONE OF US!
WHAT IF I TOLD YOU I COULD GET YOU AND YOUR FAMILY OUTTA HERE?
YOU'D BE FREE FROM HELL AND STARTING FRESH AGAIN!
ONLY THING IS: THERE'D BE NO TELLING WHAT YOU'D BE STARTING FRESH AS!
WE'D GO WITHOUT QUESTION! ANY EXISTENCE WOULD PROVE SUPERIOR TO THIS NEVER-ENDING PERSECUTION!
THE BEE-KEEPER APPROACHES! ALL IS LOST!

APARIUS : BEE-KEEPER OF HELL.
READY TO DRAIN HIS BLOATED VICTIMS OF THE DAYS' TOOTH-SOME ACCRUAL OF BLOOD, PUS AND HONEY.
STEP FOR-WARD, TRESPASSER.
YOU CANNOT ESCAPE MY SPOUTS.
YOU UGLY MOTHER! YOU'RE GOING TO REGRET HAVING A NECK THAT LONG!
SLUUUUUP
MAKES YOUR HEAD SUCH AN EASY TARGET.
MY GRANDDADDY USED TO HAVE BEES. 'FRAID THIS IS THE ONLY WAY.
AAAAHHHH!
YA TAKE THE QUEEN...
...AND THE REST WILL FOLLOW.
BZZZ
BZZZBZZ
GOOD A' PLACE AS ANY.
BZZZZ
BZZZZZ
BZZZZ

DON'T SEE NO OTHER WAY. HERE GOES NOTHING...
AAAHHHH!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE!?
GOTTA USE (gasp) MY BLOOD...
...TO DISSOLVE (gasp) THE ROOTS.
AAAAHHH!
EEEEAAAH!
BLESSED DAY! WE'RE FREE!
ALMOST, BUT NOT QUITE.
STILL A LOTTA SOUL CLEANSING TO BE DONE.
JOIN HANDS AND FOLLOW ME!
DANNY!
KATIE!

ENVELOPED INTO THE FIERY WOMB OF THE GODDESS MORTE MAMMÉ, ALL TIES BETWEEN HELL AND THE JOHNSON CLAN ARE PURGED AWAY.
ONCE THE SEED OF THEIR NEW EXISTENCE IS IN PLACE, EACH WILL BE RETURNED TO EARTH FOR 12 HOURS.
JUST ENOUGH TIME TO MAKE PEACE WITH THE PAST AND PREPARE FOR THEIR TRANSMUTATION.

PRECIOUS HOURS.
TIME TO SPEND WITH THE ONE YOU LOVE.
GOD, IT FEEL GOOD TO HAVE SOLID GROUND UNDER MY FEET AGAIN--INSTEAD OF AROUND MY SHOULDERS!
HA HA! NICE TO HEAR ONE OF YOUR BAD JOKES AGAIN!
I JUST CAN'T STOP WONDERING HOW THE LAST OF THE PILGRIMS, GRACE AND PHILIP ARE TAKING TO PLYMOUTH, MASS., 340 YEARS LATER.
I'M AFRAID THEY'RE GONNA STAND OUT WITH THOSE BUCKLE SHOES!
KATIE, THIS IS OUR LAST DAY TOGETHER, YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU.
YES.
BUT I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT.
I'M PREGNANT, DANNY. IT HAPPENED ON YOUR BIRTHDAY.
I'M SO HAPPY! THROUGH THIS CHILD WE'LL STILL BE TOGETHER!
THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN SOON, I CAN FEEL IT!
WILL YOU MAKE LOVE TO ME ONE FINAL TIME?
THERE'S NOTHING I WANT MORE.

THE TINGLE IN DANIEL'S LOINS DISTRACTS HIM FROM ANOTHER TINGLE INCREASING THROUGHOUT HIS LIMBS.
I PROMISE I WILL FIND SOME WAY OF RETURNING TO SEE YOU WITH OUR CHILD.
HOW WILL I KNOW IT'S YOU?
YOU'LL KNOW.
COVER YOUR EYES!
OH MY GOD!
RRRRRREMEMBERRRR...
I'LLLL SEEEE YOU AGAIN--
AAAHHHEEEEEZZZZZ

WESTSIDE HOSPITAL, MATERNITY WARD.
AN EXHAUSTED KATIE CRADLES HER NEW-BORN SON, PHILIP DANIEL JOHNSON.
THOUGH THE BOY HAS THE SAME GINGER HAIR AS HIS FATHER, THE FAMILIAR FAMILY BIRTH-MARK HAS NOT BEEN PASSED ON TO THIS GENERATION.
A SWARM OF HONEY BEES ENTER THE OPEN WINDOW.
AYHHHHH!
KATTTIE IZZZ ME-- ALL OF UZZ. DANNY.
YOU'VE MADE ME IZZZO HAAAPPY.
I'LL ALWAZZZZS LOVE YOU...
OH MY GOD! COVER THE BABY!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, SWEETIE.
IT'S ONLY DADDY!
HE CAME TO SAY GOODBYE...
THE END

AFTERWORD

The end is here, but it's all far from over.

My tenure as editor of CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER is at an end. As the observant of you have already read in previous missives, David Wohl is now taking the helm on this book. I now join your throngs as a loyal reader; for once hell has touched you, it always holds on to a piece.

But first, some final notes —

Before I go, I want to thank Dan, the Prince of Chichester, for his consultory assistance; Tom Daning for his more hands-on work; the myriad of interns whose life this book and I have transformed into a living hell; and the behind the scenes workers in Manufacturing, Stephanie Fogle and Melissa Dannon, who help make the final book look so good. Especially I want to thank Clive Barker for his commentary, constant guidance and direction on this project which bears more than his name.

Second, I want to remind all you loyal Barkerphiles out there of the onset of an explosion of new Barkerverse titles out there, due for release next summer. If you love super heroes, you've t seen nothing until you've seen them through Clive's unique vision. Just imagine.

Imagine super heroes once really walked the Earth. They once saved the world, before they destroyed themselves, and our memory of them. Now, a new generation of heroes is returning, HYPERKIND, THE NEW HEROES, to fulfill a promise of greatness that will save the world again, or doom us all.

Imagine you're a kid, suddenly discovering you can see into the world of the dead who walk among us, unseen. These wonders await ECTOKID, half-boy, half ghost, who must begin a desperate quest to find his departed father, before forces in the here and hereafter achieve their mission — to destroy them both.

Imagine that the only thing that stands between Earth and a horde of dimension-hopping invaders — masters of war, weaponry and evil — is a failed stand-up comedian, endowed with god-like powers. As the world falls apart around him, Earth's last, best hope. . .is a joke. This is the stage for HOKUM & HEX.

And last, but far from least, imagine a young man, haunted by a demon, and pursued by an angel, doomed to have them both locked within him. He is SAINT SINNER, a man between worlds, possessed of the best and worst of all, in a battle unending.

And lets not forget THE HARROWERS, that group of intrepid adventurers born within these pages who will also be leaping into their own monthly comic in '93. The BARKERVERSE is expanding. Thanks for being part of the ride.

Marc McLaurin
Now Former Editor

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Marc McLaurin
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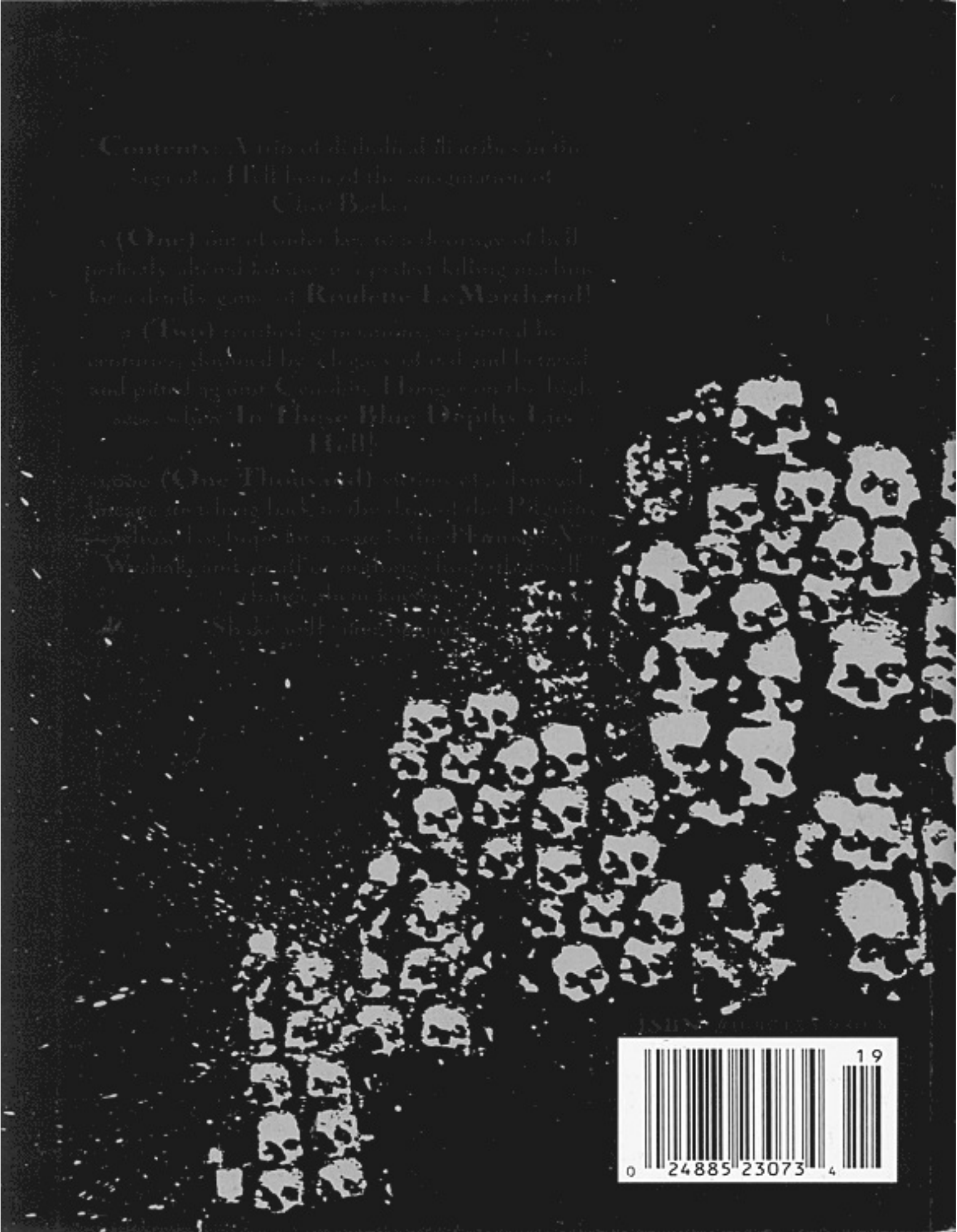

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